

Dear Secretary Salazar:

The disastrous oil spill from the BP leased offshore drilling platform known as Deepwater Horizon is an urgent wake up call for the federal government. We are learning that BP has been disregarding worker and environmental safety while reaping the benefits for far too long.

According to the Center for American Progress, in the first quarter of this year alone, it is estimated that BP made approximately \$62 million per day.

The Deepwater Horizon tragedy also raises many questions regarding the safety of BP's other drilling operations. Allegations have already arisen that the spill may have been caused when BP representatives, already far behind schedule at the Deepwater Horizon platform, pressured platform operators to use a process to expedite completion. Whatever the cause of the spill, it ultimately cost lives, affected livelihoods, damaged the fragile ecological balance in the Gulf coast, and will impact taxpayers for years to come.

While the actors in this horrific event all seem to be pointing fingers of blame at each other, we ask that you take a proactive approach to penalize BP, the lease operator, and its abhorrent environmental and safety record.

Unfortunately, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is only the most recent example of BP's long history of blatant disregard for safety and environmental protection. According to the New York Times, the Minerals Management Service reports that between 1996 and 2009, BP-operated rigs spilled 7,000 barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico--or about 14 percent of the amount spilled by any other company. Instead of learning from its mistakes and adopting measures to prevent future industrial disasters, BP continued to put its workers, the public, and the environment at risk in favor of higher profits. Indeed, BP's record may indicate a worsening and devolving culture of profit-motivated negligence.

In March of 2005, an explosion and fire at the BP Texas City refinery resulted in 15 deaths and 180 injuries. Investigators from the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) believe this explosion could have been avoided had it not been for the "organizational and safety deficiencies at all levels of the BP Corporation." Since safety is not a valued part of their mandate, BP refused to change its practices.

In 2009 the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fined BP \$87 million for hundreds of safety violations at the Texas City refinery, many of which were originally identified after the 2005 explosion but never addressed. As recently as March 2010, BP was fined another \$3 million dollars for violations at a Toledo, Ohio refinery similar to those that contributed to the 2005 Texas City refinery explosion.

In 2006, failure to conduct necessary pipeline maintenance resulted in spills of over 200,000 gallons of crude in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. Once again, BP did not follow established safety regulations, ignored warning signs, and was reluctant to make the necessary fixes once the problem was discovered. Major problems continued in 2008 and 2009 in the region, some of which resulted in major gas leaks, oil spills, injuries, and deaths. All of this following a \$500,000 fine in 2000 for failing to report illegal dumping of hazardous materials by one of its contractors between 1993 and 1995.

Given this appalling record of misconduct and disregard, we ask that BP be banned permanently from receiving any future drilling leases. Their conduct at other operation sites indicates a blatant disregard for the lives of their workers, the preservation of the environment, and the millions of U.S. citizens who could be impacted by an environmental disaster.

We also ask that Mineral Management Services (MMS) immediately send inspection teams to each of BP's operation sites to ensure that BP has all the proper procedures and plans to help prevent a spill and that they are meeting their environmental and worker safety obligations. If BP cannot demonstrate that it has met its obligations, we ask that you consider suspending the offending leases. We also ask that you outline for us the criteria that your department uses for determining suspension of a lease.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter and for your commitment to preserving the environment for future generations. We simply cannot allow BP to continue to exploit our resources and workers while disregarding its obligations.

Sincerely,